

Some observations of birds in northwestern Tripolitania 1948-9

by J. G. Parker

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Bundy (1976) cites me for the only definite record of the Redwing *Turdus iliacus* in Libya (Parker 1950). I was stationed at Sabratha, western Tripolitania from 16 Dec 1948 to 5 Sep 1949 and I now realise that the following notes may also be of more than personal interest.

I have followed the sequence and nomenclature adopted by Bundy and, for convenience, cited for each species the number and abbreviation for status he gives. Apart from personal observations, all information is derived from Bundy unless another author is quoted.

Except for the coastal strip Pisida to Misurata, I had no opportunity to make observations except within the area east of Zuara (30 miles west of Sabratha), west of Tripoli and north of the 500m contour in the Jebel. Two species, the Andalusian Hemipode *Turnix sylvatica* (84) and Streaked Scrub Warbler *Scotocerca inquieta* (248), whose status in this area is doubtful, were not observed.

3. *Podiceps nigricollis* Black-necked Grebe WV
c. 50 (one shot) on a flooded salt-flat west of Sabratha, 26 Dec, following severe gales some days before. All other records were maritime, with maximum of up to 50 in Tripoli Harbour.

36. *Anser anser* Grey-lag Goose AV
5 at 6 miles east of Sabratha, on a salt-flat, allowed an approach to within 100 yards, 1 Jan. Not previously recorded in Tripolitania.

50. *Aquila chrysaetos* Golden Eagle (WV) RB?
A sub-adult half way between Azizia and Jefren at Bir el Gnrem, 7 Aug.

59. *Circus cyaneus* Hen Harrier (PV)
A male seen at close range Sabratha, 4 Apr. One previous record.

79. *Falco subbuteo* Hobby PV CB
One in trees east of Sabratha on the early date of 6 Feb.

83. *Coturnix coturnix* Common Quail PV
Heard frequently and seen occasionally round Sabratha, 20 Mar to end Apr. C/8 found 13 Apr. Witherby *et al.* state the species breeds Morocco to Egypt, while Etchécopar & Hüe (1967) say "not definitely" in Libya. Bundy does not refer to even occasional or casual breeding.

149. *Chlidonias leucopterus* White-winged Black Tern PV
A juvenile flying south over a wadi near Garian, 15 Aug; following recent rains the wadi contained isolated pools of water. All other records refer to the coastal strip.

166. *Clamator glandarius* Great Spotted Cuckoo AV
 One probable east of Tripoli, 19 Feb. This bird, seen perched on a telegraph wire, had a crest, a long tail and slim build. The identification was considered doubtful because of the date and because the bird appeared smaller than I supposed the species to be. Etchécopar & Hüe (1967) suggest that the species winters in Egypt and Morocco, and Bannerman (1955) records it in a latitude north of Tripoli on 17 Feb. On first seeing juveniles of the species in Portugal I was surprised at how inappropriate the adjective "great" seemed.

167. *Cuculus canorus* Cuckoo (PV)
 One Sabratha, 13 Apr. One, dark brown, presumably a female in hepatic plumage, Sabratha, 14 Apr.

176. *Apus affinis* House Swift PV

178. *Apus melba* Alpine Swift MB PV
 Both species seen in "some numbers" at Wadi Chafalla, near Jefren, 6 Aug. My impression was that I was watching birds from nearby breeding colonies, though there is no evidence of either species breeding in Tripolitania.

267. *Luscinia svecica* Bluethroat (PV)
 At least two females Sabratha 19-21 Mar. A white spotted male, 22 Mar. None of the other 13 records for Libya, including those of Willcox & Willcox (1978), was of the white spotted form.

282. *Saxicola rubetra* Whinchat PV
 1-2 at Sabratha, 17 Dec to mid Jan. Not seen between 17 Jan and 27 Mar, when the first spring migrant was observed. Not usually seen in winter.

284. *Turdus iliacus* Redwing AV
 Besides my single record of a bird in trees near the museum at Sabratha⁴ 12 Feb, Willcox & Willcox (1978) record Redwings in mixed flocks of thrushes, Jan & Feb 1970.

291. *Emberiza caesia* Cretzschmar's Bunting AV
 At least 2 in a party of 4-6 buntings near Sabratha, 17 Apr. The head colour, "grey blue not grey green", was diagnostic of *E. caesia*. The possibility that others in the party were Ortolans *E. hortulana* cannot be excluded. Only one previous record for Libya, in Cyrenaica.

References:

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